



# The Beacon

The newsletter of Chapter 54  
Lake Elmo, Minn.

November 2003

## A Magnificent Skybolt

### November 2003 This month's program

Monday, Nov. 10, 2003

- Social Hour at 7 p.m.
- Meeting at 7:30 p.m. Chapter House, Entrance B, Lake Elmo Airport
- Program: Legal questions on Leases, Enforcement and Liability/ Insurance Policies.
- Speaker: Greg Reigel owner of Aero Legal Services. Check out his Web page at <http://www.aerolegalservices.com>



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I've never flown in an open-cockpit before, so when the opportunity suddenly arose in October, I jumped at it; literally. Jim Grist, a Waupeca, Wisc., pilot was visiting 21D at the request of Minnesota Public Radio, which was doing a story about homebuilding, based on a book Grist's daughter wrote. You may have seen the pair at the *Author's Corner* AirVenture.

I wasn't supposed to get a ride; I was just there to provide the other half of a conversation with Grist which was to be recorded as part of the story. Then we were to retreat to the Collins Aerodrome to look at the RV7A project in the garage – err hangar.

But when Grist arrived – fashionably late – and shut the engine down, he asked “who wants to go for a ride.” Given that my broadcast partner is a chicken, I was volunteered for the task.

It was a short introduction to the Skybolt; just a lazy flight over the St. Croix and around the NSP stack in Stillwater, but it was a great introduction to the capability of the biplane and at least whetted my appetite to aerobatics, even though we didn't do any. “I noticed when I let you

But Grist took the yoke and did several steep turns – on a dime it seemed – while keeping the left wing focused on the NSP stack, then made an approach to 21D that

I don't know how common the Skybolt is, but coincidentally as we landed, an-

*(Continued on page 3)*

## President's Column

*by Dale Rupp*

A couple of weeks ago I needed a break from building my RV-6 and so we took our Motor Home to Wahpeton, North Dakota. I wanted to gather research on my Dad's brother who had learned to fly in the early '30s at the North Dakota State School of Science in Wahpeton. Uncle Wes did most of his flying barnstorming the local area in a Waco 9. By 1935 he had accumulated close to 500 hours and acquired a Transport license. In 1935 he crashed the Waco 9, a homebuilt called the Wildcat, and a Velie Monocoupe. He died in the last crash at the age of 28.

North Dakota State School of Science was our first stop to look for any record of Uncle Wes. With the help of people at the alumni office we found references to him in their yearbooks. In a previous visit years ago we had obtained copies of the newspaper article of his death. The helpful people at the school suggested that we should visit Gerald Beck at Tri-State Aviation who was interested in the history of the early days of flying in Wahpeton. They also said that he was building wings at the airport.

Prior to this I had heard from chapter 54 member Garry Gray, that someone in Wahpeton was rebuilding wings for P-51s. I now had two reasons to visit Gerald Beck. When I walked in the door to Tri-state Aviation the first thing that greeted me was a rebuilt wing of a P-51 in a wing rack. As I walked around it, I saw the fuselage of a NEW P-51A with an Allison engine being built. I found Gerald Beck and explained my mission. He gave me a book by Charles Klessig, a local pilot that knew Uncle Wes. The book mentioned Uncle Wes and also has pictures. In the course of the conversation he said that he thought that he had the Velie M-5 engine from the crash that killed Uncle Wes. He had purchased it from someone that had it with a pile of airplane junk behind his barn.

He took me through a room where they were building two more P-51s into a big hanger. The first thing I saw was a B-25 and another P-51. This one was in flying condition. We picked our way around all sorts of good airplane parts to find the Velie M-5. It had been in a wreck and there are not too many Velie engines around, so it is possible this is from Uncle Wes's Monocoupe. Gerald Beck rebuilds new P-51s around the data plates of old ones. He has a modern machine shop with two CNC machines and all sorts of sheet metal machines. I saw a large collection of old parts they use as templates to build new parts. All of these parts are in boxes with an index. He is organized. I counted at least five employees in my brief walk around. During my tour of his operation; I saw five P-51s in the process of being built. A Stearman project, a Beaver ready to fly, an RV-4 that can fly and a RV-8 being built. He likes the RV-4 the best of all his collection. Gerald said that the P-51A should be ready for next year's Oshkosh. Gerald told me that he got started in the crop dusting business.

One winter he bought a F4U project which he rebuilt and started flying in air shows. When people saw the quality of workmanship in the Corsair they started asking him to build parts for them. Years later, here he is building P-51s in the little town of Wahpeton, North Dakota. Gerald said I should visit with an old gentleman, Leon, in Battle Lake, Minnesota, who might have known Uncle Wes. So on the way home we did just that. Turns out that Leon was 15 years old at the time of the crash. He knew my Uncle and had even been given a ride in the Waco

*(Continued on page 3)*



## Chapter 54 Directory

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Chapter member meet on the second Monday of every month at the Chapter House, Entrance B at Lake Elmo Airport (21D). The House is at the base of the airport beacon. The newsletter is printed on the first Monday of every month. Parts of the newsletter may be reprinted with appropriate credit.

21D RCO 118.625  
21D Unicom: 122.8  
TPA: 1932'  
Runways: 4-22 (2497' x 75')  
14-32 (2850' x 75')



**Jim Grist discusses an engine problem that Dale Rupp was having on his homebuilt. It turned out to be a carburetor problem.**

*THE MAGNIFICENT SKYBOLT (Continued from page 1)*

other Skybolt entered the pattern and landed at 21D. Off we went to lunch and our recording session, and on our return we took a quick tour of Dale Rupp's RV6 project. We never did. But we did get a story, and here it is.

↔

Homebuilt aircraft enthusiasts often cite the Wright brothers as their role models. One hundred years ago the Wright brothers designed, built and flew the first homebuilt aircraft. These days there are more than 23,000 homebuilts licensed by the federal government, with 1,000 more being assembled every year. A Wisconsin man's homebuilt aircraft is the focus of a new children's book on aviation, timed to coincide with the 100th anniversary of flight.

James Grist is a tall, lanky pilot from Waupaca, Wisconsin. Years ago, the retired welding company businessman started work on his home-built biplane. "Ordered some metal, ordered some wood and started whacking away," Grist says.

The result is a stylish yellow and white, open-cockpit aircraft called a Skybolt. The family watched as Jim Grist devoted countless hours to the task. He says it took about eight years and cost around \$10,000.

His daughter Julie Grist said construction eventually moved from the basement and took over the garage. "Once, he was in his tuxedo ready to go to dinner," she says, "but he was out there waiting for my mom and putting one of the gauges in the cockpit, and I remember snapping the picture and thinking, 'Holy cow, this is a passion he has.'"

Julie Grist has written a book about the experience. It's for younger readers, and it's titled, *Flying: Just Plane Fun*. James Grist volunteered to make the two-hour hop from Waupaca to the Twin Cities recently to show off his homebuilt. Another homebuilder, Minnesota Public Radio's online editor Bob Collins, came along. Seconds after shaking hands at Lake Elmo airport, Collins and Grist waded

into the minutiae of homebuilt aircraft assembly.

Collins was curious about a picture in his daughter's book chronicling the building of the biplane. There's Grist, his arm around the waist of his wife in their Waupaca driveway, smiling, standing next to the metal frame of the half-finished aircraft with the motor roaring.

"The engine is running and the propeller is on," Collins says. "Why isn't that thing running away from you?"

"I had it tied to the house with a very stout rope," Grist answered.

The only wedge into a conversation between two homebuilt aircraft enthusiasts is to suggest an airplane ride. In an instant, Collins donned goggles and headphones and was strapped into the front cockpit of Grist's biplane.

After a short flight over the scenic St. Croix River valley, Collins returned flushed with exhilaration, which he could only express in more pilot jargon.

"Boy, you can make wonderfully short approaches in this, can't you?"

Translation: Grist's biplane is highly maneuverable and doesn't need much room to turn to approach a runway.

Feet on the ground, Jim Grist told the story of his airplane. The Skybolt was designed by Lamar Steen nearly four decades ago.

"This guy, Lamar Steen, was a high school teacher in Denver," Grist says, "And he got an idea it would make a good class project to build an airplane."

The now deceased Steen started a company that still sells plans and parts for building the aircraft. There are nearly 600 Skybolts in the air in the United States.

Grist says the aviation bug bit him as a child growing up in Wisconsin, when he went for his first biplane ride.

His daughter Julie Grist says she decided to write a book about her father's homebuilt after her son went for a ride.

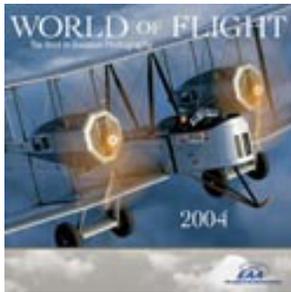
"It was his turn to take a flight, and he had a great time up in the air," Julie says. "Then he had all these questions: 'How does this work, why does this stay up, does it get pushed or pulled, or how does it happen?'"

The book, *Flying: Just Plane Fun* answers those questions and others. People interested in learning more about home built aircraft can get in touch with the Oskosh, Wisconsin-based Experimental Aircraft Association, or one of the organization's 31 chapters in Minnesota. ◀

*PRESIDENTS CORNER (Continued from page 2)*

9. We talked about the Beck operation and he asked if I had seen the Corsair and the Japanese Zero that will fly someday. They were in another hanger along with a London Double-Decker bus. If you are ever in Wahpeton, North Dakota, stop in and see if you can visit this very unique operation. I know where I am going next summer in my RV-6. ◀

## WORLD OF FLIGHT CALENDARS ON SALE NOW!



Beginning with the November 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, EAA Chapter 54 members will be able to purchase 2004 "World of Flight" calendars for \$10.00 each. This is significantly below the EAA price of \$12.99 plus shipping and handling. These calendars feature:

- 12 flight-inspiring months to schedule appointments and important events.
- Full-color images ideal for framing.

Dates to assist in planning your trip to EAA AirVenture Oshkosh and the many EAA Regional Fly-Ins throughout the U.S.

The Chapter has limited quantities of these calendars and they will be sold on a first come, first served basis. Paul Hove has volunteered to oversee the sales of these calendars.

## Minutes of Chapter 54 Annual Meeting

Monday October 13, 2003

Meeting was called to order by President Dale Rupp at 7:30 p.m.

### TREASURER'S REPORT: Paul Liedl

Balance on hand: \$10,072 Expenses: \$ 1,429 includes general expenses and pancake breakfast. Profits from the pancake breakfast were \$ 2,600.

There was one visitor from Stillwater Township - Barry Dayton

Elections were held with a full slate of candidates as follows:

PRESIDENT - PAUL HOVE

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION - ART EDHLUND

VICE PRESIDENT - DAVE CROSS

DIRECTOR OF YE'S - AL KUPFERSCHMIDT

TREASURER - PAUL LINNEROOTH

DIRECTOR OF HOUSING - DAVE FIEBIGER

SECRETARY - BETTIE SEITZER

DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP- JOHN RENWICK

*(Continued on page 6)*

## CALLING ALL DARs!!

A note from chapter headquarters in Oshkosh: As we developed the new amateur-built aircraft DAR program, we determined we also need to develop a easy to use directory of AB DARs. Below is the list that will, in the near future, appear on the [www.eaa.org](http://www.eaa.org) web page - but not yet. Within the list we have provided two recommendation columns:

The first column says - EAA Volunteer DAR - these are the EAA Technical Counselors who will volunteer their services to EAA members - and will provide certification inspection for expenses only. We expect the first EAA Volunteer DARs to be available by the end of January 2004.

The second column says - EAA Member Recommended DAR - these are the current DARs who have done outstanding jobs for members, who in turn highly recommend them to other EAA members. A "Yes" in this column means they have been recommended.

We need your help for completing the second column - as you can see the list of recommended DARs is not too large, but this is your chance to add to that if you or your chapter members have had a good experience with a listed DAR and would like to recommend him/her to other EAA members.

If you do have a recommendation, please reply send a message to Randy Hansen at [rhansen@eaa.org](mailto:rhansen@eaa.org) with the state and the name of the DAR and we'll update the list before it goes live on the web. Thank you very much in advance for your Chapters help with this project.

			<b>EAA Volunteer Rec.? DAR?</b>		<b>Phone</b>	<b>Restrictions</b>
<b>Albert Lea</b>	Roscoe	John	No	Yes	(507) 373-7129	Aircraft at or below 12,500 pounds
<b>Long Prairie</b>	Neidhardt	Clifford	No	Yes	(320) 732-3722	None
<b>St. Cloud</b>	Mahoney	Timothy	Yes	Yes	(320) 259-9307	FW piston eng.aircraft only

## NEW FBO AT LAKE ELMO AIRPORT



*Gatis Valters with Dan Bergstrom, fueling Dan's immaculate Tailwind*

A large crowd of pilots and aviation enthusiasts enjoyed donuts and coffee to welcome the new FBO, Gatis Valters and his wife Peggy at Lake Elmo Airport on Saturday, August 1.

Now located at the former Mayer Aviation buildings on the northwest corner of the field, Gatis and Peggy will operate a full-service aviation facility as Valters Aviation.

Aviation fuel prices have been reduced to \$2.10 per gallon. Providing aircraft repair, annuals, and overhauls since 1995, Gatis has been working at the airport since 1988 in various capacities. He can now be reached at 651-770-1191 or 651-777-1399.



*Gatis and Peggy Valters at the coffee and donuts*

## Treasurer's Report

### October's Update

Cash on hand	\$ 50.00
Checking Acct.	\$ 5,765.91
Investments	\$ 4,000.00
Total	\$ 5,815.91

Income in October consisted of \$600 in individual dues, \$130 in donations, and \$100 in clubhouse rental for a total of \$830.

Expenses for the same period were \$1,086.61. They consisted of \$38.92 for utilities, \$384.13 for landscaping, \$127.22 in ground school expenses, \$468 for EAA calendars, and \$68.34 for newsletter publication / distribution.

— Paul Liedl

## RVers SET DECEMBER MEETING AT 21d

Winter has arrived and its time for our next meetings. The date as been set: Saturday, Dec 6, 2003, 10 a.m. at Lake Elmo Airport (hosted by yours truly and my hangar partner Paul Hove). The program is being set but right now. Paul Irlbeck is on the program to discuss RV emergency procedures (this comes from recent personal experience... you'll have to come to find out the details!!). Several other items will be on the program as we get organized. But for now, please note the date. Further details will be coming! For more information, please visit the Web site of the Minnesota Wing of Van's Air Force at: <http://www.pressenter.com/~dougweil/mnwing/>

- Doug Weiler

## EDITOR'S NOTE

This is the time of year when flying news gets difficult to find. I'm weighing reducing the publication to every *other* month during the winter. If you enjoy receiving this material each month, please consider contributing material to it. There are more stories about EAA Chapter 54 members than I can possibly know, let alone get to, each month. The publication depends on you to keep it vibrant and interesting. Contributing material is easy. Just get in touch with newsletter editor Bob Collins at [bcollins@visi.com](mailto:bcollins@visi.com).

MINUTES OF ANNUAL MEETING Continued from page 4)

Additional nominations from the floor were called for. No additional nominations. Vote was unanimous for the list of candidates above.

#### REPORTS

##### LANDSCAPE - BETTIE SEITZER

Phase I of the plantings is complete. This phase is almost paid for by donations. We are still accepting money toward Phase II

##### CALENDARS - PAUL LIEDL

Calendars for 2004 will be available next month at a cost of \$10 each.

##### FLYING START - ART EDHLUND

The fall ground school is in progress with 25 class members. Any Chapter 54 member is welcome to sit in and audit any topic they need as a refresher. See the web site for the schedule.

##### YOUNG EAGLES - AL KUPFERSCHMIDT & JON CUMPTON

Working on a date to fly a class of Aerospace Program students from Farnsworth School St. Paul. Continue to fly pancake breakfast signups 1-2 at a time. We have a Boy Scout group that are working on their merit badges in aviation that will be flying. Jon announced that 77 Young Eagles were flown at New Richmond using 15 pilots & planes. Jon handed out a "thank you" gift to our pilots that participated.

##### BUILDING MAINTENANCE - DAVE FIEBIGER

He would like to see more use of the building on Saturday mornings. We are in need of another 6 foot table and a storm window for the corner window. Donation's of the item or money for these items would be appreciated.

##### WEB SITE - MARLON GUNDERSON

There are some good pictures posted on the site. He will be adding the Ground School schedule.

##### ANNOUNCEMENTS - DALE RUPP & PEG VALTERS

Dale announced that EAA Oshkosh 2003 will be on the Discovery Wings channel October 22 8:00 p.m.

Peg Valters announced that barring any problems at closing they will be the new owners of the FBO on the field. They plan on having a flight school, section maps, gas and repair services. They would welcome input and suggestions from pilots. They will be open at 7:00 a.m. 7 days a week.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m. A slide /video program was presented by John Renwick of his trip "Alaska Highway by J3 Cub"

Respectfully submitted by acting secretary - Rae Kupferschmidt

## In Search of Wilbur and Orville Wright

**T**he *Flyers: In Search of Wilbur and Orville Wright*, the latest book by NPR's Noah Adams, follows the quest by the Wright brothers to be the first to



build a heavier-than-air craft that could fly under its own power. Adams and NPR's Melissa Block recently visited Fort Myer, Va., just across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C., to see the site of the demonstration flights Orville Wright performed for the U.S. Army Signal Corps in 1908 and 1909. Adams says witnesses to those early flights could hardly believe what they had seen, though the aircraft flew barely 35 feet above the ground. Fort Myer is also the site of another first: On Sept. 17, 1908, Army Lt. Thomas Selfridge became the first person to be killed in the crash of a powered airplane. In an excerpt from the book, Adams describes the fateful flight:

I walk the fort's parade grounds, trying to imagine the flight that late Thursday afternoon, a cool day with light winds. The start would have been there by the flagpole. Lieutenant Selfridge, it's reported, took off his uniform jacket and campaign hat and sat down on the thin, narrow seat next to Orville.

With the engine exhaust explosions bouncing back from the brick buildings on either side of the field, the plane left the end of the rail, dipping once almost to the grass. Tom Selfridge, at 175 pounds, was the heaviest passenger Orville had tried to carry.

I continue south to stand in a parking lot not far from the boundary of Arlington Cemetery. Kim Holien had shown me the spot where it's believed the plane hit the ground. Orville made three turns around his oval course, climbed to 100 feet, steered for a wider turn. Those below heard two thumping noises, saw the plane shake, and noticed that Orville had cut off the motor. A propeller blade had split apart, losing power and setting up a vibration that led to the jamming of the rudder. The spectators watched as the left wing fell and the right wing rose.

Orville described it later: "Quick as a flash, the machine turned down in front and started straight for the ground. Our course for fifty feet was within a very few degrees of perpendicular. Lieutenant Selfridge up to this



**“Karey’s Gotta Land Now!”** by Karey Love  
(reprinted from “Low and Slow,” the newsletter of EAA Chapter 12, the newsletter of the Minnesota Ultralight Association)

**T**wo of us flew down to Red Wing on Saturday, Sept. 20. We bucked a south wind of 20 mph on the way there and a tailwind of 25 mph on the way back. Wow. 82 mph on the way back! I learned another lesson concerning coffee, time, bladders and the lack of landing strips.

Our trip took about 90 minutes due to the strong headwind. After about an hour my bladder started to talk to me, subtly at first but increasing in persistence and frequency as the trip progressed.

Curiosity turned into concern, then into worry and finally into RED ALERT! LAND-RIGHT NOW! Only problem, there was no place to land safely. If only I had my PPC, I could land in any one of these farm fields and attend to this emergency but, alas, my trike needs a smooth runway and longer would be better than shorter.

My GPS shows the closest airports but all of them were out of bursting-bladder range! All sorts of thoughts ran through my busy mind: Use something on board? Nope, no bottle or even a plastic bag along! Pee in my pants? Definitely last resort! Hold until I get there? Impossible — too far to go! What to do?

I noticed a waypoint on my GPS screen that I had entered weeks before, a grass strip where I had trained a new guy that lived down this way. Only 9 miles away to the West. I get on the radio and tell my buddy trailing behind me, "I gotta turn west and head for Bud Genriches farm. It's my best chance to relieve myself."

"Roger that, I'll follow."

Frantic searching for a closer landing strip as I watch the GPS too slowly move my waypoint closer to me. I keep pushing the zoom in button as the waypoint inches toward the center of the screen. 20 mile screen. 15 mile screen. 10 mile screen. 8 mile screen. Fifty-seven mph is my cruise with the cross wind. That's roughly a mile a minute and I have eight more minutes to go.

Will I make it? Can I concentrate enough on a smooth landing in this strong crosswind while my bladder is demanding all of my attention. What's it gonna be, a botched landing with dry underwear or a decent landing due to full concentration — thanks to aerial release?

Minutes go by as Mike asks, "Do you have a visual on it yet?"

"No, not yet but it's gotta be here soon."

Finally, "There it is, straightaway, a half mile ahead." I've been flying with the bar pulled in to my chest to gain an additional 8 mph. My arms are getting a little tired but what's the alternative?

I approach straight on, no time to do a fly-by to check out the windsock and field conditions. Luckily, I can see the windsock shows a straight on headwind. Good thing, too, because my distracted concentration couldn't handle a crosswind landing. This is it, buddy. Do your best 'cuz there's no going around. There's probably not going to be a long rollout or taxi back to the buildings. It's gonna be dive, land, jam on the brakes, pull off the runway so Mike can land, unbuckle, get out and pee!

As my bladder deflated, my thought processes could move back into their usual channels of content. Like, "Well, that was sure a stupid thing you did." And, "Next time, don't drink a medium Americano on the way to the hangar." ◀

*IN SEARCH OF ORVILLE AND WILBUR WRIGHT (Continued from page 6)*

time had not uttered a word, though he took a hasty glance behind when the propeller broke, and turned once or twice to look into my face, evidently to see what I thought of the situation. But when the machine turned headfirst for the ground, he exclaimed 'Oh! Oh!' in an almost inaudible voice. Suddenly just before reaching the ground... the machine began to right itself rapidly. A few feet more, and we would have landed safely."



*Detail of bronze plaque in Fort Myer, Va., commemorating the flight which killed Army Lt. Thomas Selfridge in 1908. Credit: Andrea Hsu, NPR News*

Three army surgeons were watching, and ran to the crash. A mounted cavalry officer tried to hold back the crowd. Selfridge and Orville were pulled from the dusty tangle of splintered wood and ripped fabric and taken by stretcher to the post hospital. Lieutenant Selfridge, never regaining consciousness, died that night of a fractured skull, a victim of the first fatal accident in a

powered aircraft.

#### ONLINE EXTRAS

For those of you reading this newsletter online, click the link below to hear more audio of this story:

<http://www.npr.org/dmg/dmg.html?prgCode=ATC&showDate=07-Oct-2003&segNum=18&NPRMediaPref=RM>

See more images of the Wright Brothers

[http://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/wright\\_brothers/dmc.html](http://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/wright_brothers/dmc.html)



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## **CLASSIFIEDS**

**Wanted to borrow:** I'm looking for a double offset 1/8" rivet set that has been ground down for a close fit. If you've ever built the wings of an RV, you probably know why I need this. In riveting the leading edge ribs to the main spar of the wing, you have to rivet from one side of the spar where there is already installed, the main rib for the same location, slightly offset to the outboard side. Because of that rib, you can't get even a standard double offset set in there for a straight shot at the rivet, you have to grind down your rivet set to get close enough to hold the set and gun perpendicular to the rivet. I have the double offset set, but I'd rather not take the time to grind it down (which I'd screw up anyway) if someone has already gone to the trouble. Please contact Bob Collins at [bcollins@mpr.org](mailto:bcollins@mpr.org), [bcollins@visi.com](mailto:bcollins@visi.com) or call me at work at 651.290.1414.